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An American's Opinion  
of . .  
British Colonial Policy.

BY

POULTNEY BIGELOW.

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*Reprinted from the "New York Times."*

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LONDON:  
DARLING & SON, LIMITED.

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Malden-on-Hudson, June 8, 1915.

*To the Editor of The New York Times :*

SIR,

On the two occasions when I had the honor of addressing Princeton University I carried away admiration for the intellectual elasticity of that audience, and was inclined to give the credit to the excellent men composing its Faculty.

It is for this reason that I marvel at the long letter in to-day's TIMES contributed by Ernst Johann Spaeth of that Faculty. For in that letter this learned Ph. D. of Leipsic takes as a compliment to German Kultur President Wilson's masterly sarcasm when referring to the massacre of the Lusitania as having been perpetrated by a government hitherto "humane and enlightened" !

It is not my purpose to argue a point of humor with Princeton's Professor of English Letters ; but to point out an error in the field of history—a department where



exactness is of more importance than even elegance of diction. Dr. Spaeth describes England as the "most gigantic conspiracy in restraint of trade ever organized"—and as truth is dear to the American reader, who may be impressed by the academic titles of my Leipsic friend, permit me in a few words to examine gently this strange statement.

Not many years ago I sat on the club veranda at Singapore and counted twenty-five funnels of a single German steamer line. From Singapore I went to North Borneo ; there was but one line, a German, and that line carried the British mail. Later I went to Siam from Singapore. It was on a steamer of this same German line, carrying British mail. There was no other. Thence I went to Hongkong by the same excellent German line. Later I went to Australia—it was by one of this same line. To Java and the Eastern Archipelago, to Penang—it was always this vast German company doing not only all the German but the British mail service as well. The German traders, with whom I mixed freely, marveled at the infantile generosity with which Great

Britain opened all her ports to German enterprise, although long-headed people shook their heads at the thought of German skippers having a better acquaintance with British waters than their own people.

Nowhere in the British colonial world have I found the slightest evidence of commercial monopoly and certainly no favoring of Englishmen at the expense of Germans.

Even in India the German commercial traveller has roamed at will and driven Englishmen out of business under the very noses of the Calcutta Council. Germans have assured me on what they deemed the best authority that in the event of war India would immediately rise as one man and chase every Englishman into the sea. Yet when I was there the whole British garrison numbered a mere 75,000 white men over a native population nearly three hundred million.

Officers close to the Berlin Court have welcomed this war to me on the ground that all South Africa would rise and fight for Germany. It was idle for me to tell them that my experience led me to a different conclusion; they knew better.

They were all Doctors of Philosophy—and besides : Wir Deutsche wissen das Alles besser \* \* \* !

In my studies in the economic field, studies that have carried me to most of the British no less than German colonies, I have searched in vain for that “restraint of trade” which Dr. Spaeth attributes to John Bull. On the contrary, where I have found a “most gigantic conspiracy in restraint of trade” has been in the Imperial German colonies, where competing English traders have been treated to a systematic course of petty official restrictions so vexatious that finally they have given up the attempt to do business under German conditions. When I was in German New Guinea this official persecution went so far that a British trading steamer was even forbidden to get water, in order to force it to abandon trade with the natives of that neighborhood.

Why is it, lieber Herr Doktor, that British colonies are crowded with Germans ? Why is it that no German is willing to colonize on German soil ! Does Dr. Spaeth know that nearly every one of Germany's

colonies was virtually a gift from England, at a time when Bismarck was anxious to amuse his people by foreign toys, and when Lord Salisbury held all tropical colonies as of doubtful value? He gave away the western section of South Africa, which has been ever claimed as part of Cape Colony. He gave away an empire to the north of Australia, which the people of that Commonwealth have bitterly resented. Wherever the Black Eagle has shown itself on colonial soil, that soil has suddenly pined as with blight. Prussian rule alone has flourished; the natives have been reduced to slavery or escaped to the jungle; German colonists have been conspicuous by their absence.

For the benefit of Dr. Spaeth, whose colonial experience has been gained in the Aula of Leipsic, let me state that today the British flag in every one of her varied colonial possessions represents to Germans, no less than to the natives, more of justice and liberty than either of them have ever tasted before. Germany today is cordially detested in every German colony—or was at the time of my last inquiry. On the

contrary, England could raise volunteer regiments in Basutoland or Rhodesia ; North Borneo or Hongkong ; Jamaica or Barbados ; and as to India, her Sikhs, Gurkhas and Pathans have given but a foretaste of what is yet coming from the Indus and Ganges to vindicate Britain's honest rule in the Far East.

In a short letter I cannot enter into details, or I would develop the distinction between India and all other British possessions. I also anticipate my German friend, who remarks that British colonies do discriminate in favor of the mother country ; but we also know that colonies who do that are beyond the mother country's control, like Canada. But in so-called Crown colonies like Hongkong, the German trader has the same advantages as every other—or did have these advantages until God smote his rulers with megalomania, and called forth war on a scale of magnitude and misery undreamed of in the best days of the wars for religion or for the conquest of Peru.

POULTNEY BIGELOW.

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